NATO-Ukraine relations

NATO and Ukraine relations date back to the early 1990s and have since developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships. Since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cooperation has intensified in critical areas.

Milestones of relations

- Dialogue and cooperation started when Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991) and the Partnership for Peace programme (1994).

- Relations were strengthened with the signing of the 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which is the basic foundation underpinning NATO-Ukraine relations and established the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) to take cooperation forward.

- NATO opened the NATO Information and Documentation Centre (NIDC) and the NATO Liaison Office (NLO) in Kyiv in 1997 and 1999.

- The 2009 Declaration to Complement the NATO-Ukraine Charter mandated the NUC, through Ukraine's Annual National Programme, to underpin Ukraine's efforts to take forward reforms aimed at implementing Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, in line with the decisions of the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest.

- Cooperation has deepened over time and is mutually beneficial, with Ukraine actively contributing to NATO-led operations and missions.

- Priority is given to support for comprehensive reform in the security and defence sector, which is vital for Ukraine's democratic development and for strengthening its ability to defend itself.

- In response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO has reinforced its support for capability development and capacity-building in Ukraine. NATO Allies condemn and will not recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, and its destabilising and aggressive activities in eastern Ukraine and the Black Sea region. NATO has increased its presence in the Black Sea and stepped up maritime cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia.

- Since the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016, NATO's practical support for Ukraine is set out in the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine.

- In June 2017, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted legislation reinstating membership in NATO as a strategic foreign and security policy objective. In 2019, a corresponding amendment to Ukraine's Constitution entered into force.

- In September 2020, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy approved Ukraine's new National Security Strategy, which provides for the development of the distinctive partnership with NATO with the aim of membership in NATO.

Key areas of cooperation

The NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) enables consultation between the Allies and Ukraine on security issues of common concern, and directs cooperative activities. The NUC also convenes prior to a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.

NATO supports Ukraine in building capabilities and interoperability through dedicated working groups, such as the Joint Working Group on Defence Reform, programmes and Trust Fund projects ranging from medical rehabilitation to cyber defence. NATO has significantly stepped up its practical assistance to Ukraine following the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea by Russia. At the 2016 Summit in Warsaw, NATO's measures in support of Ukraine became part of the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) which was reviewed in 2018 by Ministers of Defence in the NUC. The CAP is designed to support Ukraine's ability to provide for its own security and to implement wide-ranging reforms in the security and defence sector based on Euro-Atlantic principles and best practice. Part of this package is advisory effort provided by the NATO Representation to Ukraine as well as 16 capacity-building programmes and Trust Funds.

Ukraine has supported NATO in numerous operations, such as the peace-support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO's two missions in Afghanistan, namely the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Resolute Support Mission, the NATO Training Mission in Iraq and the maritime operations Active Endeavour and Ocean Shield. It currently supports NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) and continues to provide information in support of NATO's maritime situational awareness in and around the Black Sea. Furthermore, Ukraine is building capacity and interoperability through participation in the NATO Response Force as well as through the participation in exercises such as NATO's flagship annual collective cyber defence exercise "Cyber Coalition".Given this longstanding support and significant contributions to its operations, NATO offered Ukraine in June 2020 the status as Enhanced Opportunity Partner (EOP). This status works as a facilitator, providing Ukraine preferential access to NATO's interoperability toolbox, including exercises, training, exchange of information and situational awareness. Ukraine is NATO' s sixth EOP, next to Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden.

Response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict

From the very beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2014, NATO has adopted a firm position in full support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. NATO Allies strongly condemn and will not recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, and denounce its temporary occupation. As a result, NATO Allies decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, while leaving political and military channels of communication open. NATO has increased its own deterrence posture with additional deployments to the central, eastern and south-eastern parts of the Alliance, and stepped up its support to Ukraine with training, and the delivery of equipment and defensive weapons.

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